

I see the distinguished assistant Democratic leader here. He may want to comment on that. I emphasize that we do expect at least a couple, maybe as many as four, votes this afternoon.

I welcome back all Senators of the 106th Congress. I hope this session can come to an early conclusion. It would be very important at this time, considering all that is going on. If we show we can act quickly on the remaining appropriations bills and dispose of the tax and Medicare issues, that will be very positive for our country. I look forward to working with the chairman and senior member of the Appropriations Committee to see if we can get that worked out and see if there is any way that maybe we can complete it by Thursday night when this continuing resolution will expire. We will get more information to all Senators later this afternoon, after consultation with the Democratic leaders.

I yield to Senator REID.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator BYRD would like 15 minutes prior to the CR vote, to be divided between him and Senator STEVENS, to talk about that.

During our party conferences, we will find out if we need the two extra votes on bankruptcy. It is my understanding what the leader wants is to have a vote on cloture on bankruptcy. If we have to go through the drill, we will have to have a couple votes before we get to that. I will talk to the people in the Democratic Conference at 12:30 today and report back to the leader as quickly as I can.

I am happy to hear the majority leader talking about moving forward where we left off before the lame duck session started. There has been a tremendous amount of work that has gone into those appropriation bills, the balanced budget problem we have, the add-ons, and the other things the leader has indicated we will try to move, rather than have a CR. I hope we do that. We await the direction of the majority in the next few days so we can go home and have a good Christmas.

Mr. LOTT. I thank Senator REID. We will have further announcements after consultation with the leadership on both sides of the aisle.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Arizona.

#### HAPPY BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO SENATOR THURMOND

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, congratulations to the majority leader, and happy birthday to our President pro tem, STROM THURMOND.

I remember on the 90th birthday of Senator THURMOND, a reporter asked him if he could expect to see STROM on his 100th birthday. Senator THURMOND looked him up and down and said: Well, you look fit enough to me. If you eat right and drink right, you ought to be around to see me then.

All of us are looking forward to the centennial birthday of Senator THURMOND.

#### RETIREMENT OF SENATOR CONNIE MACK

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise this morning to express how much I am going to miss our colleague, CONNIE MACK, who retires at the end of this Congress, after three terms in the House of Representatives and two terms in the Senate.

My colleague, the first Republican in the history of the State of Florida ever to be reelected to the U.S. Senate, is a valued part of our party's leadership team. He has managed simultaneously to accomplish great things for the conservative cause while also increasing the level of civility in this body.

One is tempted to call CONNIE MACK Reaganesque in the way that he combines an agreeable disposition with rock-solid principles. As chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, and as a member of the Banking and Finance Committees, he led the successful effort in 1995 to cut congressional spending by 9 percent—the largest cut in 40 years. Connie is one of the people who has led Congress in forcing the Federal Government to put its financial house in order.

He has also left his mark in the areas of medical research and protecting the pristine environment in his home State of Florida. And he has been a warm, amiable gentleman in all seasons and all situations.

I served with CONNIE MACK in the House of Representatives to which he was elected in 1982. That was a pivotal time in our politics, as he has pointed out. America had made a clean break at that time from decades of ever-increasing governmental interference in the economy. He entered Congress as a small businessman, a banker, who understood that the engine of America's greatness is its private sector. Then-Congressman MACK took Ronald Reagan's political banner as his own. As CONNIE has written, "It can be summed up in one word: freedom." President Reagan inspired him into public service, and he has eloquently defended conservatism's most deeply held principles: limited government, standing up for democratic allies around the world, lowering the tax burden that Americans bear, taming the bureaucracy and the special interests, and returning to citizens control over their own lives.

We agreed on public policy questions, Senator MACK and I. But having said that, I also know that my colleagues who opposed him on issues admire and

like him every bit as much as I do. CONNIE MACK is that kind of person.

Senator MACK said on the floor of the Senate recently—it was on an important foreign policy matter—that "we must speak the truth and stand on principle." That is what he has done daily. That is the virtuous example he has set. It is what has made him such a good public servant for Florida and America.

Mr. President, I know we will all miss our colleague, CONNIE MACK.

#### TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about the wonderful work that my colleague, JOHN ASHCROFT, has done in the Senate during the last 6 years. Our colleague from Missouri has racked up an enviable list of accomplishments in his time in the Senate.

As you know, he was responsible for the "charitable choice" provision in the landmark 1996 welfare reform law, a provision that allows faith-based organizations to compete for Government resources to help poor families. These organizations had previously been shut out of the process. The Ashcroft provision gained such strong, bipartisan support that he has expanded it so that faith-based groups can now participate in Federal substance abuse treatment programs. Senator ASHCROFT has truly helped America find better ways to attack the problems we face in our communities.

He also led the way on another major public policy improvement in the area of Social Security. Social Security, as we know, has had surpluses routinely raided to finance deficit spending of the Federal Government. JOHN was a key Member of Congress who drew attention to, and halted, this practice so that these moneys are now used to pay benefits and only to pay benefits. He introduced the first lockbox proposal in the Senate. And, at his urging, budget procedures were changed so that the objectionable practice of diverting Social Security funds to pay for other Government operations could literally be ruled out of order.

I want to conclude by saying what an honor it has been to serve with a man of such intellect, compassion, and notable integrity as JOHN ASHCROFT. He has distinguished himself as a Missouri Senator, its Governor, its auditor, and its attorney general. One thing is certain: we have not seen the last of JOHN ASHCROFT. I trust that what lies ahead for someone of his caliber is further and even greater service to his State and to his country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

#### ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the hour of 12:30 p.m. the Senate stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m. in order for the weekly party caucuses to meet.